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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8452
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9028
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8547
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3665
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0196
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5936
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4737
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 4300
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 002798

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#)
SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN BAJAUR

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (U) This is an action cable. See para

12. (C) Summary: One of our goals with the Pakistani government and military has been to improve their ability to execute all the elements of a successful counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy simultaneously. The current fighting in Bajaur, and the flooding in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and in sensitive areas of southern Punjab, present an opportunity to demonstrate that COIN principles work. By providing a phased package of immediate, medium, and long term assistance to those who are displaced, have lost homes and property, and are facing food shortages and health issues, we can deny the Taliban and other insurgents the opportunity to step in and win hearts and minds.

13. (C) We will try to use Bajaur as a test case to see whether we can help the Pakistani authorities anticipate humanitarian relief needs as a follow on to military operations, so that the population views the government as on its side - defending civilians from militants, while providing for those impacted by the fighting. At the moment, the military is concentrated on combat operations, and there appears to be no communication with the civilian authorities who are expected to respond to the humanitarian crisis. The Army now has the GOP support it demanded to begin operations; to sustain that support the GOP must deliver aid to increasingly beleaguered Pashtuns in Bajaur. We will also explore using Bajaur as an inkspot - helping the government provide relief while people are displaced, and then rebuilding and providing stay-behind security as people are able to move back.

14. (C) We are unfortunately in the react mode in Bajaur, largely because the Pakistani military was caught unawares by the intensity of insurgent resistance and did not put together a coordinated plan to handle displaced civilians. One element of our strategy should be to impress on the Pakistani military the need to put all elements of the plan in place before commencing operations rather than forcing the humanitarian and economic development pieces into a catch-up mode. We are aware, for instance, of Pakistani military plans to begin operations in Mohmand Agency (just south of Bajaur) in the near future. This provides an opportunity to avoid the problems currently being experienced in Bajaur, if we can pull Army and civilian authorities together to plan for the inevitable impact on the civilian population and for the reconstruction that will be required when they return, which will only happen when a secure environment is

established.

15. (C) The area of Rajanpur in southern Punjab, although not the scene of current fighting, has become a key recruiting ground for insurgents, and many of those involved in the Red Mosque events came from there. The government has paid little attention to the area, and already bad conditions have been made dramatically worse by recent massive flooding. Here too, we have an opportunity to help the GoP show the population that it can deliver for them, and that they have an alternative to relying on militant groups for help. END SUMMARY

IDP CRISIS - FIGHTING AND FLOODING

16. (C) Minister of Interior Malik called in Ambassador Aug. 17 to ask for assistance in responding to an internally displaced persons (IDP) crisis caused by recent fighting in Bajaur. The Governor of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has asked the Principal Officer in Peshawar for help, and the Chief Minister of the Punjab approached the Principal Officer in Lahore to seek assistance for those around Rajanpur displaced by flooding. Embassy has had a representative from AID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in country for a week to assess the situation and make recommendations. That assessment will come septel.

17. (C) Estimates of those displaced over the last month vary widely, from 50,000 to over 300,000. Our best estimates are that about 100,000 have fled Bajaur (and now are primarily in

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Lower Dir), and 100,000 are displaced in Rajanpur. GoP plans to continue the military campaign in Bajaur will likely raise the numbers there. (Note. Earlier flooding around Peshawar, for which the Embassy provided USD50,000 in disaster relief the week of August 11, has receded and activities have moved from emergency phase to recovery. End note.)

18. (C) The situation in Bajaur is challenging. It is difficult to make a precise assessment about the numbers of displaced and their needs because the security situation makes it difficult for anyone - including the government - to get in. Additionally, many of the displaced appear to have sought shelter with relatives, making it hard to account for them and to provide aid as it becomes available. Still, it is clear there is a serious humanitarian emergency underway. Mission believes we should respond urgently for two reasons. First, the area of Lower Dir, in which many people have sought shelter from fighting in Bajaur, is already very poor. Households will not be able to support additional family members for very long. We have heard anectdotally that some families in Dir are housing as many as 70 relatives -- this is clearly not sustainable. In addition, Ramadan is about two weeks away, and delivery of aid in time for that important period will go a long way toward earning goodwill toward the government.

FLOODING IN PUNJAB

19. (C) Rajanpur, which generally gets very little government assistance, has around 100,000 people displaced by flooding. The Punjab Government is getting limited relief supplies in, but roads are damaged, making relief difficult. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has been to the area, but is so far still in the information gathering phase and has not delivered any aid. The primary relief on the ground has come from the international NGO Save the Children, which admits that its efforts to date have been inadequate to address the growing humanitarian crisis. Mission strongly recommends we try to help those in this area, which has recently become a strong recruiting ground for insurgent groups, and was the home of many of those involved in the Red Mosque events. A robust Punjab Government relief effort here could help to displace insurgents as the only group to which people in need

can turn.

PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION / NGO ACTIVITY

¶10. (C) The national government has not been able to organize a coordinated response to the IDP problems. In addition, its concerns and estimates focus only on the NWFP/FATA situation.

The Punjab Provincial Government has essentially been told to expect no national help in Rajanpur. Ministry of Interior Advisor Rehman Malik told Ambassador that the government and NGOs were meeting immediate needs and that what the GoP needed from the U.S. was cash - USD20 million for immediate assistance and USD50 million for reconstruction/rehabilitation. But it is not clear that NGOs are doing much on the ground. UNHCR has convoked its cluster groups, but is apparently not yet delivering any aid. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports it is administering around USD800,000 in household goods, tenting, and the like. And the World Food Program (WFP) has assessed that about 5000 metric tons of food stocks are needed (worth about USD8 million), but has not yet decided whether to use its in-country food stocks, or to do an appeal and wait for donor responses.

¶11. (C) Minister Malik promised the Ambassador that letters would be issued authorizing NGOs access to the affected areas. We have heard some reports that expat staff are not being allowed in, but local staff seem to be getting around. One official told us that expats would be allowed in over the next few days as the security situation allowed. While we are normally concerned about access denials, in this case, it is probably not advisable that expats travel to the Bajaur and Dir areas. (Note. Rajanpur is not a problem; expats have regular access. End Note). We will monitor the access issue closely, and discuss with the GoP if there is a problem.

U.S. RESPONSE

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¶12. (C) The Ambassador has made two disaster declarations in the last ten days, the first for the flooding, and the second for the fighting in Bajaur. On each occasion, USD50,000 has been made available to Save the Children to provide non-food items (household goods, shelter materials, etc) in the FATA and NWFP. The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives is shifting its priority to Bajaur, and will be expanding its grant to Save the Children (whose local employees are able to get out and deliver assistance) to help meet the needs of those displaced by fighting.

¶13. (C) Embassy recommends making available USD1million for Rajanpur, since very few organizations are working there, and a similar amount for Bajaur, if possible. Additionally, the Narcotics Affairs Section is redirecting about USD250,000 in funds that support police forces generally (USD50,000 to Rajanpur and USD200,000 to NWFP), to a more focused effort to help police assist in the relief effort (for example, delivering goods, transporting those in need of critical medical care, providing security for relief workers, etc). We will be looking for additional funding for repair and rehabilitation, as people are able to return to their homes.

BAJAUR AS INKSPOT?

¶14. (C) The fighting in Bajaur is serious. The Pakistani military has dropped more than 500 of its 500 pound bombs, and many thousands of rounds of 133mm artillery have been fired at insurgent positions. We expect the ground campaign to continue for another two weeks or so, but recent attacks against outposts away from the current fighting could extend that. The situation could provide an opportunity, however, to make inroads against the insurgents. A robust, coordinated humanitarian response would alleviate the immediate difficult conditions. Adding benefits like routine health care, basic skills training, or classes for children

could expose the population to the advantages the government can offer.

¶15. (C) Once the fighting ends, ensuring that that benefit package follows people back to their villages could make real inroads and lay the groundwork for an inkspot approach that could steadily be extended into other areas. The challenge is that the GoP would have to be able to guarantee security - over time - for the returnees. This could be difficult to sustain, given the thin coverage of local law enforcement forces throughout the FATA and the ability of small numbers of insurgents to melt away and return later.

¶16. (C) We will also attempt to use the prospect of military operations in Mohmand (just south of Bajaur), where insurgents are moving to escape Bajaur, as an opportunity to help the GoP plan a more coherent response to the likely humanitarian relief effort that action will require. Not only would basic civil-military planning (such as a Dislocated Civilian Control Plan) alleviate hardship and hopefully avoid alienation of the population, but properly publicized, it could signal to the rest of the country that the government is back on the offensive and is taking charge. We have heard anecdotal evidence that villagers in the FATA and NWFP are tired of insurgent activities and are beginning to fight back. A properly executed civil-military operation could cement those sentiments.

ACTION REQUESTS

¶17. (C) Following are action requests:

-- Request Washington concurrence for a robust relief response (for example, recommend provision of USD1 million for relief in Rajanpur right away).

-- A TDY OFDA team to come to Pakistan for 30 days to help coordinate efforts among NGOs, international organizations, and local governments to ensure the assistance gets where it needs to go, and to identify areas in which administrative procedures are blocking progress.

-- Washington to encourage WFP to make in-country food stocks available now, and to backfill via an appeal to donors (rather than working the other way around).

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-- Washington to encourage partner nations to contribute to relief efforts, especially in the FATA and NWFP. We recommend approaches to the UK, Canada, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and Japan, all of whom regularly express to us their interest in helping in the tribal areas, but appear uncomfortable actually working there because of the security situation.

PATTERSON